

MIAMI, FLORIDA
HERALD

M - 384,824
S - 486,568

FEB 3 1978

CIA, FBI: A Parting of the Ways

BOTH THE CIA and the FBI are trying to rebuild their external image and their internal morale, and the leaves in our tea cup reveal hope for the FBI, more woes for the CIA.

Why? We'll let the statements of CIA Director Stansfield Turner and FBI Director-designate William H. Webster speak for themselves.

Judge Webster, testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Monday, promised to make the FBI once again the "top law-enforcement agency in the country." While advocating vigorous law enforcement, he added that "it should be done with due regard for the rights of our citizens."

Admiral Turner, interviewed by U.S. News & World Report, revealed that the CIA is cutting back on its meddling in other nations' internal affairs. Not that such interference is morally indefensible, mind. Or even that the CIA tends to botch intrigues that it should never have undertaken anyway.

No, said Admiral Turner, "Today we don't think that kind of interference in other people's governments — political action — is as useful a tool for this country. We're not eschewing it completely, but we're downplaying it."

Unless he has blemishes that investigators have not found, Judge Webster seems the right choice to rebuild the FBI. His personal life seems impeccable, his judicial record admirable (his decisions



Turner



Webster

were rarely reversed), his dedication to Constitutional principles unshakable.

Unless he modifies his views of its role, Admiral Turner may succeed in riding the CIA of its dead wood, but he will never lead it out of the thickets. It is desirable, indeed mandatory, for the CIA to collect intelligence from abroad; national security demands it. But fomenting revolutions elsewhere, inviting more Chiles and Angolas, should not be U.S. policy.

So Judge Webster may well reform the FBI, because he speaks within the context of law and due process. But Admiral Turner, by not disavowing CIA meddling in other nations' internal politics, has set a course that those nations can only interpret as being full speed astern.

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